(x) In the choice of international events, the objective should be to keep the people informed of world developments.

The guidelines referred to above have been accepted by the Government and communicated to All India Radio and Doordarshan. These guidelines are followed by the Media scrupulously in production and presentation of news bulletins and current affairs programmes.

Sponsord TV serials

*275. SHRI BHAGAT RAM MANHAR:
SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Doordarshan is likely to announce the opening of Sponsored TV serials from various registered producers; and

(b) if so, by when such an announcement is likely to be made?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT): (a) and (b) Presently Doordarshan is in the process of informing all those persons/firms who have been selected for registration with Doordarshan as producers/Directors. Doordarshan would soon start inviting the producers/directors to submit proposals for sponsored programmes on those subjects which are required as per programmee needed. All the empannelled persons would not be simultaneously required to send proposals on their own.

Suggestions for policy changes in Comprehensive Crops Insurance Scheme

*276. KAILASH PATI MISHRA:
SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the date, when Government had received the report of the Group which had suggested policy changes in the Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme, after conducting an indepth and critical review of the functioning of the Scheme;

(b) what are the suggestions of the Group as regards to (i) covering of every single agricultural crop; (ii) covering of every single farmer who is poor/marginal; and (iii) covering of farming even in a remote and distant place; and

(c) what is Government's response to each suggestion?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL): (a) The Government had received the Report of the Group constituted to conduct an indepth and critical review on the functioning of Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme (CCIS) on 12th August, 1988.

(b) and (c) The Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme (CCIS) is applicable to farmers availing crop loans from cooperative credit institutions, commercial banks and the Regional Rural Banks for growing Wheat, Paddy, Millets, Oilseeds and Pulses crops in any area of a State which has been notified for an insured crop during a season under the scheme. The Group constituted by the Government to conduct an indepth and critical review of the functioning of CCIS has made the following suggestions for enhancing the coverage of areas, crops and farmers:

(i) *Covering every single Agricultural Crop.*—The scheme should continue to cover only the crops presently included under the scheme i.e. Wheat, Paddy, Millets, Oilseeds and Pulses, for the time being. However, in case any of the implementing States so desire, they may run their own scheme for additional crops such as Sugarcane, Cotton, Potato etc. Appropriate technical assistance and reinsurance coverage can be had from the Government of India.

(ii) *Covering every poor/Marginal Farmer.*—The Group has recommended that the crop insurance should be con-

tinued to be linked with the crop loans. It also recommended that a separate scheme for non-loanee farmers may be framed to be operated on experimental basis, at an appropriate time.

(iii) *Covering of framing even in remote and distant place.*—The Group has not made any recommendation in this regard because the CCIS is already applicable in any area of an implementing State, notified under the scheme.

2. The Government has considered these suggestions and decided that no other crop should be covered under the CCIS for the time being. The recommendation of the Group to cover the non-loanee farmers on experimental basis under the CCIS was also considered by the Government but was not found feasible for implementation at present.

Availability of Graphite ore in Tamil Nadu

*277. PASUMPON THA KIRUTTINAM: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Graphite ore is abundantly available in Tamil Nadu;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Prime Minister had recently laid the foundation of a Graphite ore project; and

(d) if so, the details of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR): (a) and (b) The Graphite occurrences in Tamil Nadu are mainly in Sivaganga Taluk of Pasumpon Muthuramalingam district with a reserve of 2,20,000 tonnes and in Tirumangalam Taluk of Madurai district with a reserve of 17,500 tonnes.

(c) The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the 'Sivaganga' Graphite Project on the 26th October, 1988.

(d) The project anvisages processing of 200 tonnes of Graphite ore per day for production of 28 tonnes of 96-99 fixed carbon.

Vijayanagar Steel Plant

*278. SHRI J. P. JAVALI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have sent fresh proposals on the long-pending Vijayanagar Steel Plant to the National Development Council for its clearance;

(b) if so, what is the estimated cost of the project; and

(c) whether the project would be completed during the Eighth Five Year Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Loans and grants to States for construction of houses for weaker sections

*279. SHRI PRITHIBI MAJHI: Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether any amount has been given as block loans and block grants to the States during the last three years for construction of low cost houses in rural areas for the economically weaker sections; and

(b) if so, the amount given to Assam during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) The Union Government provides central assistance for State Plans in the form of block loans and block grants, but this is not linked to any particular Scheme/Programme/Project. However, the distribution of central assistance amongst different sectors including housing in rural areas for weaker sections is finalised by the State Governments/UT Administrations on the basis of annual plan discussions.